2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

statements of missionaries in charge of boarding-schools which take pupils from different tribes, or from compound managers in charge of mixed compounds on the copper belt. These seem to agree that the Bemba are bad at hard, continuous work, but good at tasks for which daring or sudden exertion is required. Among the highly paid employees on the more dangerous underground work at Wankie coal-mine, Bemba-speaking natives are in the predominance. In urban areas they are football enthusiasts, almost maniacs, but whether in mine or in school they are said to lose interest in any task at which steady day-to-day work is required. Whether this is an innate temperamental trait or whether it is a habit of mind dependent on strong warrior traditions it is impossible to say, but it certainly affects the whole nature of this people's agricultural work, as will be seen. (Cf. 'The will to work', Chap. XIX.)

In their relations to others the Bemba are considered to be touchy and quarrelsome. At Luanshya mine, to give only one instance, it has been found necessary for the Bemba wives to draw their rations in a separate queue in order to avoid disputes with the women of other tribes. This reputation for quarrelling may be due to the quickness with which the Bemba seem to flare into rages and then suddenly cool, but it is also probably associated with their strong tribal tradition of superiority to the other tribes on the plateau. This expresses itself in countless ways. On one occasion the boys at Lubwa training school left in a body for their villages, because they discovered they had been ranked after one of the 'subject' tribes in a competition for tidy dormitories. At the mines trouble is caused by Bemba hurling too freely the epithet of 'slave'. But besides their aggressive attitude to members of other tribes, the Bemba are quick to take offence amongst themselves. They are obsessed with problems of status and constantly on the look-out for their personal dignity, as is perhaps natural in a society in which so much depends on rank. All their human relationships are dominated by the rules of respect to age and position, and I should hazard a guess that more quarrels were caused by imagined slights than by material damage of any kind. It is probably this universal acceptance of the rights of rank that makes the Bemba appear so submissive and almost servile to the European compared to some of the more democratic tribes such as the Bisa or the Inamwanga. Arrogant towards other tribes, and

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

181 Arrogant towards other tribes, and

609 touchy towards their fellows, they seem to endure in silence any kind of treatment from a chief or a European.

181 To my mind their most attractive characteristics are quick sympathy and adaptability in human relationships, an elaborate courtesy and sense of etiquette, and a great polish of speech. A day spent at the Paramount's court is apt to make a European's manners seem crude and boorish by contrast. In ordinary intercourse the Bemba strike one as more sophisticated and civilized than the neighbouring Bisa, but much less sensible, hard-working, and efficient in managing their practical affairs.

Country and Climate.[1]

131 A glance at the Tribal map will show that the Bemba proper only inhabit the central portion of the country over which the Cibemba-speaking peoples are scattered. The natural boundaries of this Greater Bembaland are: Lake Tanganyika on the North, Lake Bangweolu to the West, and the escarpment of the Luangwa valley rift to the East. Only to the South is there no geographical boundary and the same type of forest extends almost uninterruptedly from Mpika to Broken Hill, 350 miles away.

133 The Bemba country is generally described as the 'Great plateau' of Northern Rhodesia. Crossing the country from the west to the east one seems to be moving over a series of tablelands tilted and bent into different shapes. Two or three days walk from the main escarpment to the East the general undulating character of the 'plateau' comes to an end in a succession of lesser scarps until one descends to the Luangwa escarpment proper. Natives are so impressed by this terrific natural boundary that they have been known to make a special journey to gaze down on the Luangwa valley from the *Mucinga Lubemba*—the 'great wall of the Bemba country'.

The country is very well watered. The divide is on the North-eastern side of the area. Streams to the east of this flow into the Zambesi, by way of the Luangwa, those to the west belong to the Congo system. The Chambesi, a broad still river that crosses the Bemba territory from the Northern border to the South-west is the most significant landmark in native eyes,

[1] Mrs. Gore-Browne drafted these first four paragraphs for me. *Vide* also A. G. Ogilvie, 'Co-operative Research in Geography; with an African example', *British Ass. for Advancement of Science*, Section E, 1931.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

574 lady of rank, whom I knew to have eaten little that day, refused an invitation to a meal. She asked me, with a sniff, who they took her for? Was she to cross the village 'just to sit down to a few mushrooms'?

574 622 The hospitality given to travelling chiefs must be reckoned in a different category. At the visit of the *mfumu*, each woman must contribute a little flour, and the headman produce chickens, the gift of honour, and, if possible, beer. But the presentation of the basket of flour and the live fowls is an act of homage, rather than mere provision for the traveller. It is brought by the headman and his elders and offered with the formal salutation of respect (*ukutota panshi*)—clapping and rolling on the back on the ground—and is reckoned as part of the chief's dues as the owner of the land (cf. Chap. XIII). But in any case it would be thought impossible to give a chief cooked food. He could not eat it because porridge cooked on 'impure' fire would endanger his life,[1] and it would be considered, I think, in the nature of an insult. Chiefs visiting each other will exchange uncooked food to be prepared by their respective staffs, but only a chief's head wife could send a royal visitor dishes of porridge and relish. All these distinctions show clearly the extent to which prestige is associated with the right to distribute food rather than its mere possession or consumption, and it is not surprising that the whole etiquette of feeding travellers is considered so important by a people constantly preoccupied with problems of status. Every traveller's departure is followed by lengthy discussions among the women as to what he received and what he ought to have received, and the Bemba proverb, 'Flour which is not yours is ash' (*Bunga ubushili bwenu, mito*), can be well understood.

574 602 609 Finally, there are strangers to be fed. This is an important matter at the present time since many natives, travelling four or five hundred miles up the motor road, are forced to stay *en route* at villages in which they have no close relatives. Hence it is important to discover what the old tradition of hospitality was and whether it is still observed. The correct procedure for a man entering a village is to ground his spear and sit down in silence in the veranda of the nearest hut. He should not speak until one

[1] The chief's wife has to make new fire either by friction or with matches and sometimes to mud the floor freshly before she can prepare his food when in a strange village.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

of the inhabitants comes up and asks him his origin and works out in the interminable African fashion the line of his descent. Then it may become clear whose relative, if anybody's, he is, and therefore whose responsibility. This practice is usually followed still, but the old custom of making a ceremonial obeisance in front of the headman's hut, and thus claiming a meal from him, I only saw once observed. On the motor road hospitality rules are changing. Nearing Kasama I have heard natives coming up from the mines shouting, 'I am dying, I, a member of the such-and-such a clan,' and such an assertion of clan membership would have been enough to ensure a meal formerly. Nowadays this is emphatically not so. Villagers on the motor road would have been eaten out of house and home if they had stuck to the old rules of hospitality. A certain amount of food is actually sold along the route, usually at exorbitant rates, but there is no doubt that men and their families returning from the mines suffer real privation on the way.[1] The obligation to share food with nearer relatives is still observed even in urban districts, but not the wider ties of clan membership.

Permanent or Semi-permanent Visitors.

More permanent hospitality is offered to kinsmen who come to stay for six weeks to some months, either because they are short of supplies, have quarrelled with their relatives at home, are back on holiday from the mines, or because they want to amuse themselves by a change.[2] Women visitors who are near relatives of the wife, whether married or not, are easily incorporated into the women's domestic team. The matrilocal family group is merely extended to include additional real or classificatory mothers, daughters, cross-cousins, or grandchildren. For a short visit a hut will be cleared for them; for a longer stay a new house may be built. If the visitor is a person of status she will be given millet of her own to grind, if possible, since that is the highest compliment. If supplies are shorter, she will have a basket of flour divided out to her, or otherwise she will merely share in the family dish and her husband will eat at the *nsaka*. Usually the arrangement varies, according to conditions, from day to day.

[1] The Compound Manager at Luanshya estimated that a man returning from the mines on foot requires 10*s*. at least to spend on food *en route*.

[2] The former visits take place in the hunger months, January to March, and the latter in the hot season, August to November, when the garden work is done.